

Social Care Services Board
Performance and Finance Sub-Group
Tuesday 16 August 2016

Verbal update for the Board

Risk Registers

The sub-group reviewed the Children, Schools and Families risks and issues log with the Assistant Director of Commissioning and Prevention, and the Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement.

High risk levels were identified for the following:

- transformation of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services
- development of early help/prevention systems
- systemic safeguarding failures leading to death or serious harm of a child
- implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- workforce recruitment
- delivering a sustainable budget
- increasing demand, including numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The sub-group discussed the range of actions that sought to minimise or mitigate these identified risks. The sub-group explored the role of partners such as district and borough councils in reducing risk.

The sub-group raised concerns regarding a reduction in the quality of service due to potential future cost cutting measures. This will be carefully considered through the budget planning process.

Officers stated that the service was doing more with regard to prevention; seeking to reduce pressure on safeguarding services and thus reduce costs while also improving outcomes for children and their families.

The sub-group felt that there was a lack of focus on the role of families in relation to the risk register. The Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement commented that families were playing a key role, citing the role of Family Voice in developing the SEND strategy as a key example in this respect.

The sub-group was told that there was an issue related to the number of people taking up free Early Years places. There was concern that families would not register in time for the council to receive the correct level of Dedicated Schools Grant funding. This will be closely monitored.

The sub-group noted that it had reviewed the Directorate risk and issue log in response to a request from the Chairman of the Council Overview Board (COB), and would feedback. It requested a further update was brought to a future meeting. It also asked that the risks identified were assessed for financial impact, and that this was included as part of the budget planning discussions for the sub-group in autumn 2016.

Children's Services Key Performance Indicators Review

The sub-group reviewed the Key Performance Indicators with the Interim Head of Children's Services.

Officers shared the Children in Need Census 2015/16. It was highlighted that the number of children on Child Protection Plans (CPPs) for two or more years had been reduced to 1.9% in July 2016 since the figures reported in the census, and that the Service had undergone significant improvement in this regard. It was noted that one of the key reasons for this was the improved management oversight of which children were subject to CPPs.

The sub-group was informed that there were an increasing number of children becoming subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time. It was noted that the greater number of children coming off a CPP meant an increased risk of them becoming subject of a CPP at a later stage.

Officers proposed a future item outlining the audit and quality assurance processes for case management, highlighting that this would demonstrate how the service was developing consistent standards.

The sub-group discussed the number of assessments by the service carried out within 45 days. It was noted that there was an increased in year demand for the service by circa 3000 assessments. Officers explained that a team of temporary specialist assessors were being recruited to focus solely on completing assessments. This was a short term measure aimed at reducing caseload for social workers, and increasing the number of assessments in the lead up to the introduction of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in October 2016.

The sub-group noted that South East regions and North East regions were in need of improvement. A number of factors were cited, including high case-loads and a high turnover of staff. The Interim Head of Children's Services outlined the targeted work in these areas, and praised the team for having worked to meet the challenges they faced.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the role of the MASH and the Safer Surrey practice guide in improving consistency of practice. It was requested that the Safer Surrey Practice Guide be distributed to the Board.

Officers informed the sub-group that management of social workers had improved and that a consistent approach was being undertaken by all area managers.

It was noted that staff morale was currently higher, citing that staff turnover had slightly decreased, and that social workers presented their work on individual cases well in recent interview sessions with improvement advisors.

It was recommended that children becoming subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time was reported as part of the Children's Services Key Performance Indicators.